

Senate Judiciary Testimony, 18 July 2012

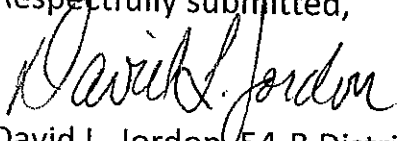
The veterans' treatment court bill is an excellent piece of legislation which uses traditional treatment court methods to help veterans involved in the criminal justice system re-integrate with the community, while holding them accountable for their crimes and making sure they receive the treatment they need. A special feature in many veterans' treatment courts is the assignment of a mentor, a brother or sister veteran who acts as a motivator, friend and support person through the court and probation process. The special bond veterans have with each other provides in many cases a start to rebuilding trust and hope in the veteran who is now involved in the criminal justice system. Frequent (monthly) formal court reviews, monitored counseling and substance testing, community service and monetary consequences are part of the usual eighteen-month sentence of probation. This is usually structured to move a veteran through three phases, consistent with progress in probation, along with a "post-graduate" phase to allow for gradual return to self-sufficiency and taking care of any lingering requirements.

The bill as drafted allows this, and recognizes that some level of crimes involving violence should be included. This makes sense because the primary duty of our military and the training and experiences members are given involve violence. The bill also requires the consent of the defendant, the prosecuting official, and the presiding judge for someone to enter. I think this is a great step forward in recognizing a growing need that is just beginning to affect our criminal justice system. Since treatment rather than incarceration is the focus of veterans' treatment courts, our court's experience has been that fewer jail bed days have been used. Jail is used as a last resort. Moreover, the programming and support services given to veterans have been earned by virtue of their service. By aiming veterans in the direction of these services, Michigan will use more federal dollars for prevention instead of using more Michigan dollars for incarceration.

I thank all the Legislators, staff and numerous interest groups who have worked so long and hard to craft this bill. It will, I believe, make Michigan a leader in the

veterans' court movement. More importantly, it will further the goals for veterans put so succinctly by Jonathan Shay, a noted veterans counselor to help them develop a vibrant and healthy life for themselves, their families and their communities.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "David L. Jordon". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

David L. Jordon, 54-B District Court Judge

Presiding Judge, Matt Brundage Memorial

Ingham County Veterans' Treatment Court